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ABSTRACT

Communities Have Options in Control of Education (CHOICE) has been developed as a plan of action and a means for American Indian communities to exercise their responsibilities in providing a quality education as defined locally by responsible Indian groups. CHOICE aims to provide for a legitimate Indian voice in all education programs operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and to help Indian communities provide for each student a program of high quality which will prepare him to make informed choices throughout his life including those instances where the schools are not operated by BIA. CHOICE ties very closely with other Bureau and Federal programs. It provides the tribe or community with options on the kind of education and the delivery system they desire. Among these are: an educational program that respects Indian cultural values; a quality education program for Indian children enrolled in public schools; boarding schools of high quality; adequate financial assistance for undergraduate and graduate college attendance; an effective education program for exceptional children--handicapped and gifted; creative learning experiences for preschool children; adult education; summer activities; education staff who are sensitive and appreciative of the needs and heritage of Indian children and youth; and alternative education programs for Indian youth who are not in school or employed. (NQ)

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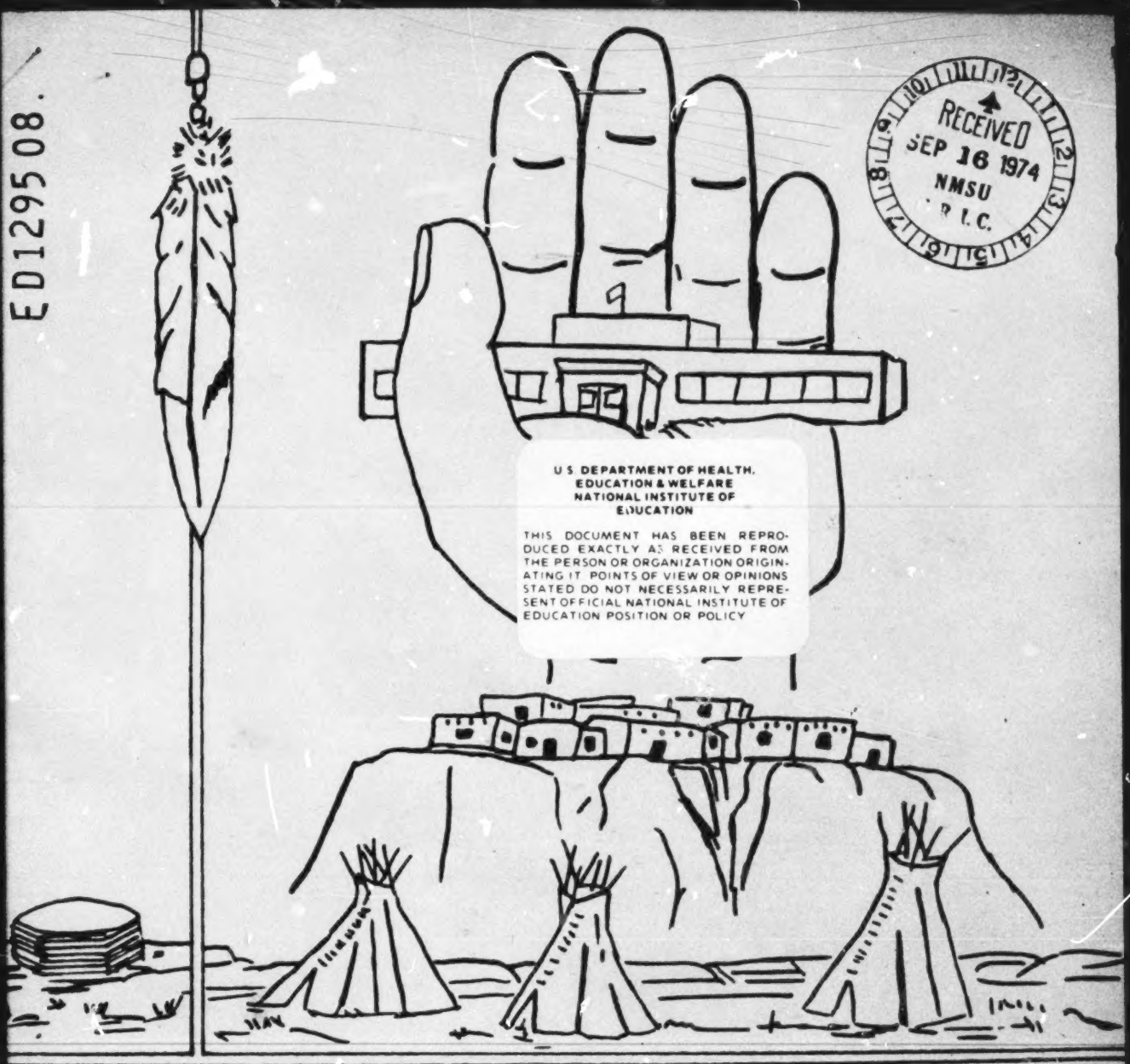

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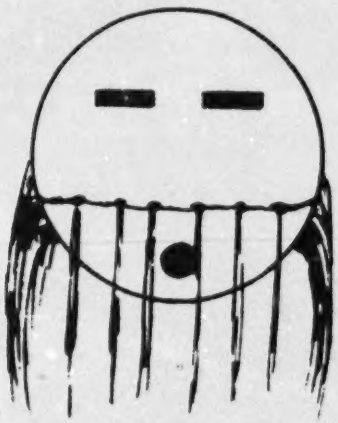
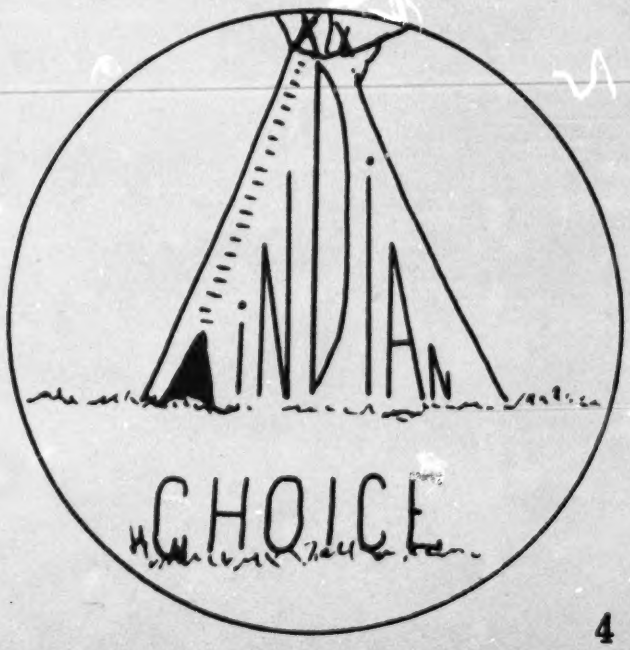
C H O I C E is a process rather than a program.



CHOICE has been developed as a plan of action and a means for Indian communities to exercise their responsibilities in providing a quality education as defined locally by responsible Indian groups. The tools and directions which it proposes simply set down on paper the voice of Indian people as it has been expressed in meetings, budget statements and suggestions over the past several years.

While the BIA cannot guarantee the appropriation of funds to do all that might be desired, it does pledge that after a tribal group or community has made their needs known, the Bureau will work with the group to carry out its objectives.



CHOICE -
THE EDUCATION CHALLENGE

Education is the cornerstone of democracy--the one best hope for individual attainment and for national strength. The vitality of every nation and progress of all people have been determined primarily by the quality of the schools. Societies have flourished with limited development of material resources, but never with limitations placed on the development of intellectual resources. A national study has pointed out that in some nations possessing abundant natural resources, people live in semistarvation. Other nations that have invested in human capital have achieved high productivity, even though they have meager natural resources. No illiterate nation has achieved a high level of productivity, while all literate nations have relatively high per capita income.

Education must, therefore, be the heritage of all citizens - Indian and non-Indian alike. For Indian people the primary challenge is the choice of the delivery system and the kind of education which will best serve Indian needs. The proud and diverse Indian cultures must have freedom of expression along with all cultures in the rich tapestry of mankind which stretches across the United States.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION

The primary responsibility for the education of the child rests with the parents of the child and the community in which they live. As in the case of the majority of other American citizens, many Indian children are in public schools. Such public schools operate within State statutes passed by elected representatives and specific policy direction of local school boards elected by the community served. Seventy percent of Indian children of federally recognized tribes are in public schools.

At the present time many federally recognized Indian parents and communities do not have sufficient resources to provide education to their children not in public schools. Therefore, the Federal Government supports necessary educational functions for approximately twenty five percent of the Indian children of federally recognized tribes through provision of federal school operations. For those Indian children in public schools where the community resources are not sufficient for a quality education, the Bureau is also authorized to make grants to such public school systems to insure quality education that meets the needs of the Indian children attending those schools.

In the direct provision of school facilities and in the grants to States for public schools, the BIA wants to be responsive to Indian needs and desires. It is recognized that the primary responsibility for education rests with the parents of the children themselves.

THE CHOICE PROGRAM

The Bureau of Indian Affairs proposes to be as responsive to Indian requests for change as it can be and to make possible increasing acceptance of responsibility for the direction of their children's education by Indian people. The objectives are:

(1) Provide for a legitimate Indian voice in all education programs operated by BIA.
(2) Help Indian communities provide for each student a program of high quality which will prepare the individual to make informed choices throughout his life including those instances where the schools are not operated by BIA.

Many of the proposals which follow are already in effect to some extent in the Bureau educational system. We know that they work and are prepared to move on a broad front which will achieve substantial change by 1976.

The CHOICE Program provides options to the tribe or community and ties very closely with other Bureau and Federal programs. A tribe or community may request the following assistance:

(1) A comprehensive educational needs assessment. This could include pre-school, elementary, secondary, adult and higher education and be related to total community needs.
(2) The development of tribal or community education objectives and establishment of priorities.
(3) A broad educational plan developed with the objective of providing the kind of educational program needed and desired. The plan could identify those aspects which might be performed under contract with the Bureau. A part of the plan might be devoted to facility needs.
(4) Technical assistance to assist the tribe or community in the placing of this plan in operation.
(5) As the plan develops, the Bureau would endeavor to provide technical assistance to help resolve problems and evaluate progress.

The CHOICE Program seeks to provide the options for Indian people to exercise their right to locally determine the kind of education and the delivery system they desire.

INDIAN INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Citizen control of the schools is a cherished American ideal. The Bureau objectives shall be:

(1) Every one of the present 200 Bureau schools will, by 1976, be operated by a management system chosen by the beneficiaries of that school -- either Indian operation, public school or BIA.

(2) Every bureau school will be operated with the policy advice of a community or tribally-elected school board. In this option final policy and personnel decisions rest with BIA.

(3) Parents of Indian children in public schools will be helped to exercise their just measure of control in the education process through the public school boards and parent involvement possible in the various public school systems.

Implementation of these objectives will be sought through the following:

(1) Where a Bureau facility is in operation a full range of options for carrying out the education delivery system will be explored along with the procedures for implementation. These may include:

a. operation under contract, or grant either in full or in part;
b. public school status;
c. Bureau operation, and
d. other options that may be suggested by Indian people. For contract operation there will be the right to return to Bureau operation if this is the desire of the tribe.

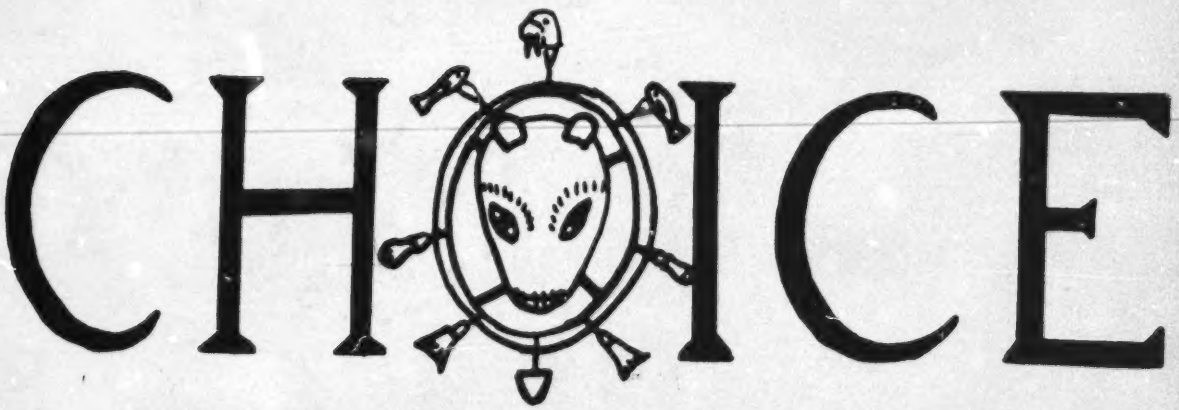
(2) The community, parents and tribal beneficiaries of every school operated by the BIA will be informed through meetings and literature concerning the full range of options.

(3) It is recognized that if a delivery system other than BIA operation of a school is chosen (for a school now operated by BIA) that Federal employees will be involved. Since qualified teachers will be needed for any of the other options selected, a method for providing continued Federal benefits for employees in Indian operated schools will be developed.

(4) Enabling policy and guidelines will be developed to insure that every school operated by the Bureau is provided with a representative policy-making school board which is consistent with the mode of operation selected by the community or tribe.

(5) The Bureau of Indian Affairs will be organized to provide the following services to the fullest extent possible:

a. Training for Indian people to be able to more fully participate in educational decision making and leadership roles - including school board membership.
b. Assistance in the development of school boards, Bureau contracts or grants and JOM supplementary funding proposals.
c. Technical support and services in curriculum, evaluation, school construction and administration to contract and JOM supported schools as well as Bureau-operated schools.
d. Advocacy of Indian options in public schools through review of programs and the involvement of Indian parents. Initiation and follow-through of action to encourage Indian involvement, voter participation, school district attention to Indian needs, and improvement of understanding between Indian and non-Indian people.
e. Exercise of a leadership role with State Departments of Education to promote quality education programs in public schools serving Indian pupils.



CHOICE AND THE QUEST FOR QUALITY

In the sections which follow an attempt has been made to set forth some program elements which it is believed reflect much of the desire of the Indian community in its search for quality in the educational programs serving them. They represent options which we believe a democratic society should make available to its members. At the same time, all must recognize that funds in support of education are limited. As local tribal bodies make determinations which give emphasis to one or more program elements there is a continuing necessity for choice. Indian communities acknowledge their responsibility for the future well-being of their children; the Bureau of Indian Affairs acknowledges its responsibility to provide the assistance which those communities desire.

What we are saying to Indian people is: "Tell us what you want for your children; we will listen and do our best to help make these things come true."

AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM THAT RESPECTS INDIAN CULTURAL VALUES

CHOICE

An education program which respects the values of Indian cultures recognizes that diversity is needed and healthy since it promotes strong identification for individuals with a special life-way in which dignity and respect are rooted. Programs must be sensitive to the traditional values and institutions but must also recognize factors of change, perhaps conflict. The underlying concept must be that people live according to value systems, mores and institutional systems that have developed for specific reasons and to serve unique requirements. In those instances in which Indian communities desire emphasis on cultural studies, the goal of the cultural studies program will be to develop, coordinate and extend the human resources of tribal communities to a wider range of education programs, from pre-school through higher education, to meet the individual needs of personal identity and pride in heritage. A range of options available to Indian communities should include enriched curriculums, better training for teachers of Indian students and new materials in all forms that reflect accurately the Indian civilizations, institutions and values that endure.

In the final analysis, the fundamental concern of cultural studies centers on understanding the factors and mechanism of the continuity of culture in the midst of change. The Bureau will provide leadership in finding ways to bring full options to the Indian people to use past traditional strength in future applications.

A QUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR INDIAN CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost 70% of Indian children enrolled in school attend public schools. There are a number of problems involved including inadequate facilities, lack of programs to meet the special needs of Indian youngsters and inequality in the services provided. The BIA will assist Indian people to insure that Indian students in public schools receive the kind of education that will enable them to live adequately wherever they choose.

The BIA will strive to support Indian requests for:

(1) Strengthening local Indian participation in determining the adequacy of the programs offered in public schools.

(2) Making available to eligible public schools districts materials, services and advice which will enable them to develop education programs which will more adequately meet Indian needs.

(3) Contracting with Indian groups for administration of Johnson-O'Malley funds.

(4) Providing information and assistance in developing guidelines to insure that equal services are provided to Indian students.

(5) Assisting public school districts to receive construction funds from all available sources in those instances where Indian-owned lands within the district prevent adequate funding from local sources.

BOARDING SCHOOLS OF HIGH QUALITY

There is much concern among Indian communities and Bureau personnel over the boarding school programs. A variety of needs - for example, stronger college preparatory courses, better vocational education, special education, counseling, improvement of the home living program, language and cultural studies - have been identified.

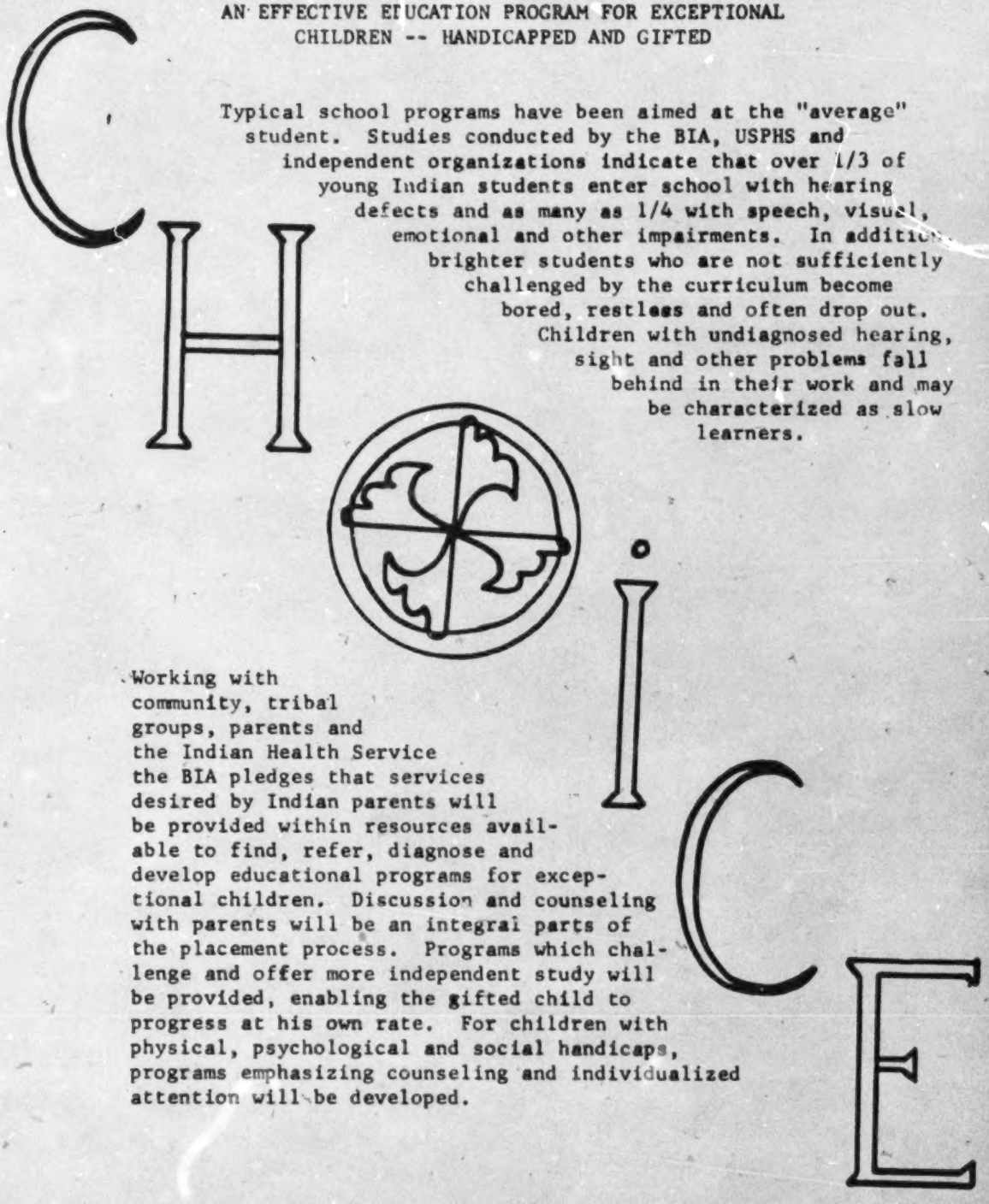
The BIA has undertaken a review of several of the off-reservation boarding schools in cooperation with Indian people. Through this process needs have been identified and goals established. Based on the goals, the Bureau will be able to focus its resources on programs which meet the special needs of the students at each of these schools. In some instances this may mean that a school will focus on certain curriculum areas such as vocational education. In other instances it may mean a strengthening of guidance and counseling programs and the addition of new courses and revised instructional programs. All boarding schools will be provided policy direction by a representative, elected or tribally authorized school board. Curriculum and other policy matters will be established in cooperation with these boards.

ADEQUATE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

If more Indian people are to be able to assume higher level jobs and policy making responsibilities it is essential that adequate financial assistance be available at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Many tribes are taking leadership in this field by establishing tribal educational trust funds. In 1972 the BIA provided higher education assistance to over 10,000 Indian students at the undergraduate level and a token number of graduate students. The number has grown rapidly in the last few years and further phenomenal growth is anticipated.

The Bureau goal will be to work with Indian tribal and community groups to assure adequate funding for all undergraduate and graduate students in need of help by 1976. This effort will include an improved program of information distribution for prospective students and an increase in the funding level of scholarships to an adequate amount, using whatever resources are available including P.L. 92-318.

AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN -- HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED



Typical school programs have been aimed at the "average" student. Studies conducted by the BIA, USPHS and independent organizations indicate that over 1/3 of young Indian students enter school with hearing defects and as many as 1/4 with speech, visual, emotional and other impairments. In addition, brighter students who are not sufficiently challenged by the curriculum become bored, restless and often drop out. Children with undiagnosed hearing, sight and other problems fall behind in their work and may be characterized as slow learners.

Working with community, tribal groups, parents and the Indian Health Service the BIA pledges that services desired by Indian parents will be provided within resources available to find, refer, diagnose and develop educational programs for exceptional children. Discussion and counseling with parents will be an integral parts of the placement process. Programs which challenge and offer more independent study will be provided, enabling the gifted child to progress at his own rate. For children with physical, psychological and social handicaps, programs emphasizing counseling and individualized attention will be developed.

CREATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

CHOICE

The BIA will seek funds to provide a comprehensive program of early childhood education (0-8) if desired by the Indian community. This program would encompass a variety of services, all based on the local situation. It would be positive in nature, aimed at providing a healthy, happy child who wants to become involved in the education process. It would focus on the entire family, with strong emphasis on education programs for parents and the total family as their children's most important educators. Program design and services would be developed and coordinated by parents and the community in relation to its particular needs, built on strengths of their child rearing practices and using native teaching materials and language wherever possible.

CHOICE

ADULT EDUCATION

The CHOICE program will seek to provide an option of adult education to enable Indians to improve their opportunities for employment and further learning through education. Many Indian people, educated in prior years, are at a disadvantage because they do not have sufficient language, social or economic skills. Effective involvement in community and tribal affairs requires an educated citizenry. The BIA is pledged to provide assistance in the identification of the education and training needs of adult Indian people and in improving access to services which will meet these needs on a continuing basis.

CHOICE

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

The educational needs of Indian children extend to appropriate programs during the summer months to provide expanded bi-cultural experiences and to obtain full utilization of school facilities. The CHOICE program enables local Indian people to exercise their option to provide for their children an ever-increasing variety of compensatory and cultural enrichment experiences within available funds. Summer programs may be improved to provide more meaningful and relevant experiences to Indian parents and students by:

(1) Contracting with local Indian groups, at their request, for administration and operation of these programs.

(2) Providing a healthy variation from normal school year programs and expanding the scope of the child's learning.

(3) Providing adequately supervised recreational programs for young people during the summer months.

(4) Emphasizing opportunities for employment of local Indian youth in the operation of these programs.

One aspect of an education training program the BIA can provide and that will be given top priority concerns the preparation of Indian teachers for Indian schools. Programs that are essentially career opportunities specifically designed to provide Indian para-professionals with full professional status would be emphasized. Training designed for para-professionals should focus on the needs of students.

CHOICE

Training programs should also deal with helping the non-Indian person to become a more effective teacher of Indian students. Of special importance would be programs designed to assist experienced teachers (non-Indian and Indian alike) to improve their skills. All education training programs should contain the latest teaching principals and incoporate known research in the field of teacher education, especially as it relates to serving Indian students.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Educational programs must be housed in facilities that allow them to function successfully. Planning these facilities requires highly skilled and technical competence as well as a great deal of time. Adequate facilities are vital to any program and the BIA will work to see that they are provided as soon as possible. Indian communities will be involved in the planning of the educational facilities which will help them accomplish their goals.

The planning, designing and construction of a new facility requires at least two to three years. In establishing goals and long-range plans, therefore, this time factor must be considered. From the beginning of the planning process, local tribal groups, parents, students, staff members and BIA specialists will work in cooperation.

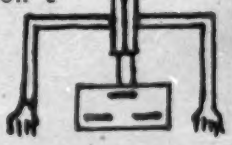
CHOICE

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR INDIAN YOUTH WHO ARE NOT IN SCHOOL OR EMPLOYED

The Bureau pledges to work with Indian people in planning, and developing various types of education programs to help keep students in school and to get other to return to school. Latest data indicated a 42 percent high school dropout rate for Indian students compared to a 26 percent national average.

It is recognized that the home, the community, and the church as well as the school have a responsibility for providing stimulation and incentives to children to continue their education. The Bureau in carrying out its responsibility in this connection will work with Indian communities on alternative education programs for an estimated 10,000 high school age Indian youth who are not in school and for whom no other educational facility is available than the BIA. Such programs must be flexible and highly individualized in nature. They will include work study, apprentice-type programs which emphasize learning while doing. Tribal groups, local businesses and industries, unions and large corporations may receive subsidies for intern programs to provide youth necessary work opportunities with reasonable pay, skills training, tutoring, counseling and special instruction.

Working with Indian people, the BIA will also investigate the educational possibilities in youth and community centers, tutorial and remedial instruction programs, vocational-industrial education centers, mobile units to take education to the students, open campus programs, schools without walls, street academics and study other possibilities to bring education to Indian youth who won't come to school or who are in danger of dropping out.



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